

**IN THE CLAIMS**

Please amend the claims as follows:

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1. (Twice Amended) A method for forming a crystalline silicon nitride layer, comprising the steps of:

providing a crystalline silicon substrate with an exposed precleaned surface;

removing a native oxide from the exposed surface;

precleaning the exposed surface by employing a hydrogen prebake after an amount of time has elapsed after the removing step; and

exposing the exposed surface to nitrogen to grow a continuous crystalline silicon nitride layer.

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10. (Twice Amended) A method for forming a node dielectric layer in deep trenches, comprising the steps of:

providing a crystalline silicon substrate with trenches formed therein, the trenches including exposed silicon surfaces;

removing a native oxide from the exposed silicon surfaces;

precleaning the exposed surfaces by employing hydrogen prebake after an amount of time has elapsed after the removing step;

exposing the exposed surfaces to ammonia to grow a continuous crystalline silicon nitride layer;

depositing an amorphous silicon nitride layer over the continuous crystalline silicon nitride layer; and